

MINUTES
SENATE AGRICULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

DATE: Tuesday, March 12, 2024

TIME: 8:00 A.M.

PLACE: Room WW53

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Hartgen, Vice Chairman Nichols, Senators Foreman, Schroeder, Carlson, Zuiderveld, Semmelroth, and Taylor

ABSENT/ EXCUSED: Senator Hart

NOTE: The sign-in sheet, testimonies and other related materials will be retained with the minutes in the committee's office until the end of the session and will then be located on file with the minutes in the Legislative Services Library.

CONVENED: **Chairman Hartgen** called the meeting of the Senate Agricultural Affairs Committee (Committee) to order at 8:02.

WELCOME: **Chairman Hartgen** thanked Senate Page Benjamin Price for his service to the Committee and asked him what he had learned during his time.

PRESENTATION: **Benjamin Price** said he had gained valuable experience as a Senate page and had made many new friends. He spoke about how much he had learned about the legislative process and how it will help him in the future.

Senator Schroeder commented that his son was currently home on spring break from law school and that he had been a House page. He mentioned how much his son had learned about the legislative process and that Benjamin would also have that knowledge going forward in his future endeavors.

Vice Chair Nichols asked what Benjamin's career and future plans were.

Mr. Price said his future career plan was to go into political film-making and after graduating high school he planned on going on his church mission.

PRESENTATION: **Idaho Honey Industry Association, Rick Waitley**, Executive Director, Idaho Honey Industry Association gave a brief overview of the Idaho Honey Commission (IHC). The IHC was made up of a combination of commercial and hobbyist beekeepers and currently there were 80 members in total. There were five commissioners and six boards of directors. He cited the IHC was involved in education by teaching the process of honey making to school aged-children. **Mr. Waitley** mentioned that one third of all food was pollinated by bees. Honey bees were a critical component of today's agricultural market and were the premier pollinators because they were available throughout the growing season and pollinated a wide range of crops (Attachment 1).

Andrea Thompson, Administrator, Plant Industries Division, Idaho Department of Agriculture (ISDA) presented the financial report for the Idaho Honey Commission. For more than 50 years the Idaho Bee Inspection Law and the Idaho Honey Industry Act designated the ISDA as the treasurer to assess and collect registration fees for every colony of bees owned by commercial beekeepers. All commercial beekeepers had to be registered with local authorities, a fee of \$10.00 annually and a fee of \$0.10 per hive above 50 were also charged annually. She stated a commercial beekeeper was anyone holding more than 50 colonies and anyone holding less than 50 colonies were considered a hobbyist. **Ms. Thompson** added

on July 1, annually there was a continued annual tax of \$0.05 per hive or colony of bees within the State of Idaho assessed as a honey advertising tax that was credited to the Idaho Honey Fund (Attachment 2).

Phil Puckett, Chairman, Idaho Honey Commission and owner of Puckett Family Farm stated his honey bees were trucked to California to pollinate almonds and to Hood River, Oregon, for pear and apple pollination. Both of these were paid pollinations and not honey producing. He mentioned he produced honey and sold wholesale to the sub-producer co-op and directly to local customers. He spoke about how not all honey was the same. Depending on the blossoms the bees tap, the color and flavor of the honey could differ greatly. Honey's color and flavor could range from almost colorless with a mild taste, to a robust flavor and dark amber brown. Honey also came in various forms including liquid, creamed, and comb. He stated that the Varroa mite was an external parasitic mite that attacked and fed on honey bees, it was one of the most damaging honey bee pests in the world. A significant mite infestation would lead to the death of the honey bee colony (Attachment 3).

DISCUSSION: **Senator Schroeder** commented he had known Mr. Puckett since he was 13 years old and it was a pleasant surprise to see him again.

Vice Chair Nichols mentioned she had tried beekeeping, but unfortunately the hive died. She inquired what got Mr. Pucket into beekeeping.

Mr. Puckett replied he had always liked honey and met a beekeeper when he was a child. While in college he was given a bee hive and currently he had 1,600 hives.

Senator Carlson asked Mr. Puckett if it was true that Idaho honey had health benefits.

Mr. Puckett replied he was not a nutritionist, but had heard local honey could help with local allergies.

Vice Chair Nichols asked Mr. Puckett what changed the color of the honey.

Mr. Puckett responded it was the nectar source, it determined the flavor and color of the honey.

PRESENTATION: **Idaho Beef Council (IBC) Review, T.K. Kuwahara**, Chief Executive Officer provided an overview of Idaho's beef industry and IBC's mission, vision, objectives, long-range strategic plans, and its members.

Ms. Kuwahara mentioned that the value of Idaho beef production ranked second in the State right behind dairy production and in January of 2023, Idaho had 2.5 million head of cattle. Over five million acres of Idaho farmland and over nine percent of State land was permanent graze land. She added that the land was unfit for growing crops or timber, but the cattle thrived on it.

Ms. Kuwahara spoke that IBC was the producer-funded and industry-directed marketing arm of Idaho's beef industry. Funded by a \$1.50 per head assessment on the sale of cattle in Idaho, the IBC carried out beef promotions, research, and education on behalf of local beef producers. She cited the Checkoff Program which was authorized under State and federal law to implement programs that increased consumer demand for beef.

Lastly, **Ms. Kuwahara** talked about the three strategic objectives. One was to grow consumer trust in beef and Idaho production, second was to expand

consumer knowledge of the heritage and commitment to the sustainability of Idaho's multi-generational family farms and ranches, and third was to increase demand for Idaho and Pacific Northwest beef in domestic and key export markets. She stated that, domestically, IBC worked with Winco and Albertsons with retail promotions. During Idaho Beef month, IBC worked with local chefs around the State getting Idaho beef on the menu utilizing different cuts of meat (Attachments 4 and 5).

DISCUSSION: **Vice Chair Nichols** inquired if the push for plant-based meat from the World Economic Forum was a concern for the IBC.

Ms. Kuwahara responded it was a top concern. The IBC and a team of other organizations and partnerships were watching and monitoring the situation.

ADJOURNED: There being no further business at this time, **Chairman Hartgen** adjourned the meeting at 9:03

Senator Hartgen
Chair

Melissa Price
Secretary